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IMPORTANT AND ALA

A LETTER
FROM THE
Hon. TIMOTHY PICKERING,
A Senator of the United States, from the State of Maſſachuſetts, exhibiting to his Conſtituents, a view of the imminent danger of an UNNECESSARY and RUINOUS WAR, addreſſed to his Excellency JAMES SULLIVAN, Governor of ſaid State.

City of Waſhington, Feb. 16, 1808.

SIR,

IN the even current of ordinary times, an addreſs from a Senator in Congreſs to his conſtituents might be diſpenſed with. In ſuch times, the proceedings of the Executive and Legiſlature of the United States, exhibited in their *public acts*, might be ſufficient. But the preſent ſingular condition of our country, when its moſt intereſting concerns, wrapt up in myſtery, excite univerſal alarm, requires me to be no longer ſilent. Perhaps I am liable to cenſure, at ſuch a criſis, for not ſooner preſenting, to you and them, ſuch a view of our national affairs as my official ſituation has placed in my power. I now addreſs it to you, Sir, as the proper organ of communication to the Legiſlature.

The attainment of TRUTH is ever deſirable: and I cannot permit myſelf to doubt that the ſtatement I now make muſt be acceptable to all who have an agency in directing the affairs, and who are guardians of the intereſt of *our Commonwealth*, which ſo materially depend on the meaſures of the *government* of the *nation*. At the ſame time, I am aware of the jealouſy with which, in theſe unhappy days of party diſſenſions, my communications may, by ſome of my conſtituents, be received. Of this I will not complain: while I earneſtly wiſh the ſame jealouſy to be extended towards all public men. Yet I may claim ſome ſhare of attention and credit—that ſhare which is due to the man who defies the world to point, in the whole courſe of a long and public life, at one inſtance of deception, at a ſingle departure from TRUTH.

The EMBARGO demands the firſt notice.—For perhaps no act of the national government has ever produced ſo much ſolicitude, or ſpread ſuch univerſal alarm.—Becauſe all naturally conclude, that a meaſure pregnant with incalculable miſchief to all claſſes of our fellow-citizens, would not have been propoſed by the Preſident, and adopted by Congreſs, but for cauſes deeply affecting the intereſts and ſafety of the nation. It muſt have been under the influence of this opinion that the legiſlative bodies of ſome States have expreſſed their approbation, of the embargo, either explicitly, or by implication.

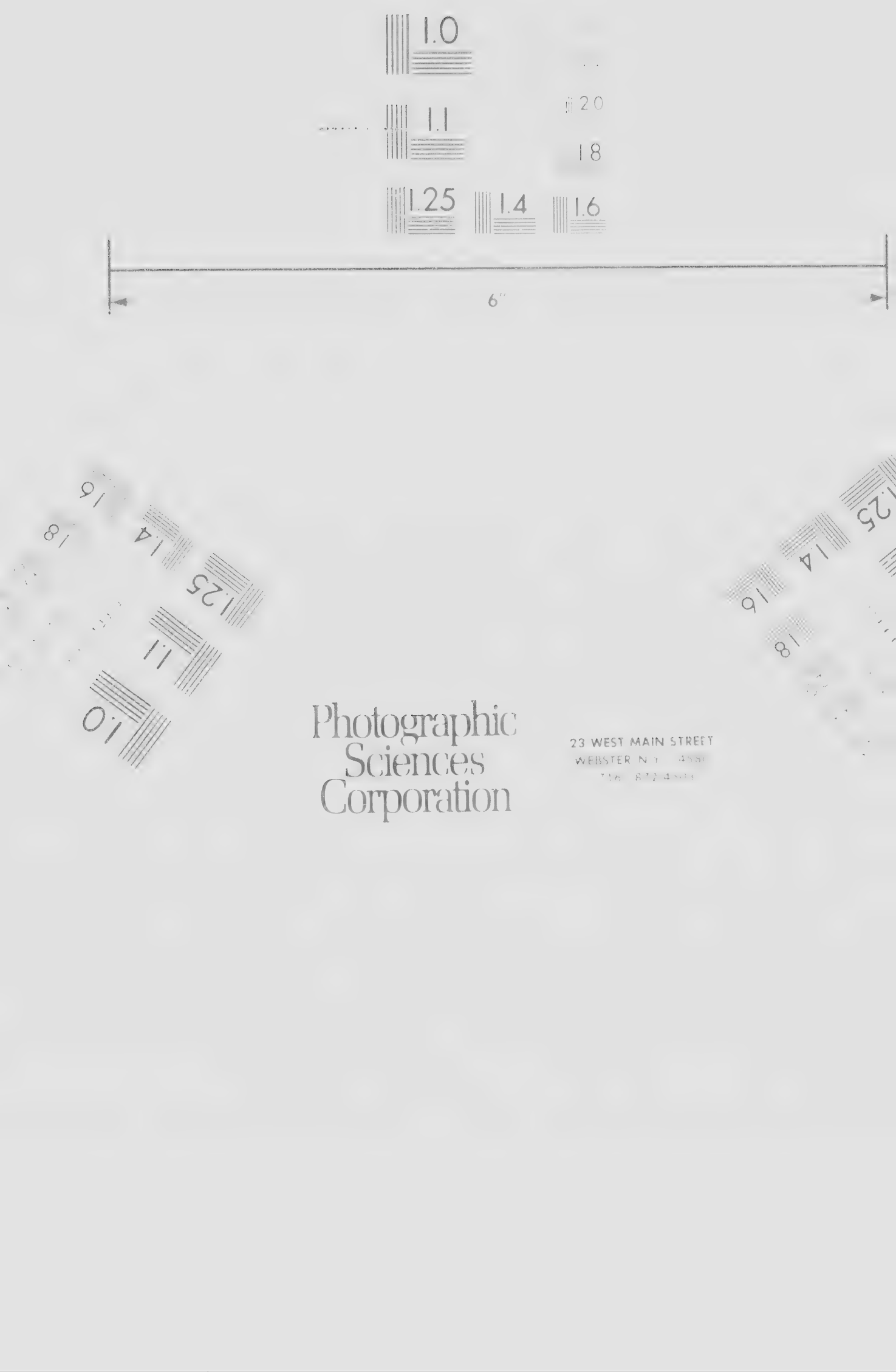
to the neceſſity or expediency of the embargo, was of little moment. Or if the danger to our veſſels, ſeamen and merchandize, had been ſo extreme as not to admit of one day's delay, ought not that extreme danger to have been exhibited to Congreſs? The Conſtitution, which requires the Preſident "to give to Congreſs information of the ſtate of the union," certainly meant, not *partial*, but *complete* information on the ſubject of a communication, ſo far as he poſſeſſed it. And when it enjoins him "to recommend to their conſideration ſuch meaſures as he ſhould judge neceſſary and expedient," it as certainly intended that thoſe recommendations ſhould be bottomed on *information communicated*, not on *facts withheld*, and locked up in the Executive cabinet. Had the public ſafety been at ſtake, or any great public good been preſented to our view, but which would be loſt by a moment's delay; there would have been ſome apology for *diſpatch*, though none for acting *without due information*. In truth, the meaſure appeared to me then, as it ſtill does, and as it appears to the public, without a ſufficient motive, without a legitimate object. Hence the general enquiry—"For what is the embargo laid?" And I challenge any man not in the ſecrets of the Executive to tell. I know, Sir, that the Preſident ſaid the papers above mentioned ſhowed that great and increaſing dangers threatened our veſſels, our ſeamen, and our [illegible]; but I alſo know that they exhibited no new *dangers*, none of which our merchants and ſeamen had not been well apprized. The Britiſh proclamation had many days before been publiſhed in the news-papers, the copy laid before us by the Preſident had been cut out of a news-paper; and ſo had the ſubſtance if not the words of Regnier's letter. Yet they had excited little concern among merchants and ſeamen, the preſervation of whole perſons and property was the *profeſſed* object of the Preſident's recommendation of an embargo. The merchants and ſeamen could accurately eſtimate the dangers of continuing their commercial operations; of which dangers, indeed, the actual premiums of inſurance were a ſatisfactory guage. Thoſe premiums had very little increaſed: by the Britiſh proclamation not a cent: and by the French decree ſo little as not to ſtop commercial enterprizes. The great numbers of veſſels loading or loaded and prepared for ſea; the exertions everywhere made, on the firſt rumour of the embargo, to diſpatch them; demonſtrate the Preſident's dangers to be *imaginary*—to have been *aſſumed*. Or if great and real dangers unknown to commercial men, were impending, or ſure to fall, how deſirable was it to have had them *officially* declared and publiſh

ARMING INFORMATION.

times, and under all circumſtances, ſhe has uniformly refuſed to relinquiſh. The reſult of the ſubſequent negotiation at London has ſhown how utterly unfounded was the Preſident's expectation, how perfectly uſeleſs all this bluſter of war. While no well informed man doubted that the Britiſh government would make ſuitable reparation for the attack on the *Cheſapeake*; the Preſident himſelf, in his proclamation, had placed the affair on that footing. A rupture between the two nations, ſaid he, "is equally oppoſed to the intereſts of both, as it is to aſſurances of the moſt friendly diſpoſitions on the part of the Britiſh government, in the midſt of which this outrage was committed. In this light the ſubject cannot but preſent itſelf to that government, and ſtrengthen the motives to an honourable reparation for the wrong which has been done." And it is now well known that ſuch reparation might have been promptly obtained in London, had the Preſident's inſtructions to Mr. MONROE been compatible with ſuch an adjuſtment. He was required not to negotiate on this ſingle tranſient act (which when once adjuſted was forever ſettled) but in connexion with another claim of long ſtanding, and, to ſay the leaſt, of doubtful right; to wit; the exemption from impreſſment of Britiſh ſeamen found on board American *merchant* veſſels. To remedy the evil ariſing from its exercile, by which our own citizens were ſometimes impreſſed, the attention of our government, under every adminiſtration, had been earneſtly engaged: but no practicable plan has yet been contrived: while no man who regards the truth, will queſtion the diſpoſition of the Britiſh government to adopt any arrangement that will ſecure to Great-Britain the ſervices of *her own ſubjects*. And now, when the unexampled ſituation of that country (left alone to maintain the conflict with France and her numerous dependent States—left alone to withſtand the power which menaces the liberties of the world) rendered the aid of all her ſubjects more than ever needful; there was no reaſonable ground to expect that ſhe would yield the right to take them when found on board the merchant veſſels of any nation. Thus to inſiſt on her yielding this point, and inſeparably to connect it with the affair of the *Cheſapeake*, was tantamount to a determination not to negotiate at all.

I write, Sir, with freedom; for the times are too perilous to allow thoſe who are placed in high and reſponſible ſituations to be ſilent or reſerved. The peace and ſafety of our country are ſuſpended on a thread. The courſe we have ſeen purſued leads on to war—to a war with Great Britain—a war abſolutely without neceſſity—a war which, [illegible] unſucceſsful, muſt bring without one inſtance of a man being taken by *them*. Three Swedes were taken out by a French frigate. I have made enquiry of all the maſters that have arrived in this vicinity, and cannot find any complaints againſt the Britiſh cruizers."

Can gentlemen of known *hoſtility* to foreign commerce *in our own veſſels*—who are even willing to *annihilate it* (and ſuch there are)—can theſe gentlemen plead the cauſe of our *ſeamen* becauſe they really wiſh to *protect* them? Can theſe deſire to *protect* our ſeamen, who, by laying an unneceſſary embargo, expoſe them by thouſands to *ſtarve* or *beg*?—One gentleman has ſaid (and I believe he does not ſtand alone) that ſooner than admit the principle that Great-Britain had a right to take *her own ſubjects* from *our merchant veſſels*, he would abandon commerce altogether! To what will every man in New-England, and of the other navigating States, aſcribe ſuch a ſentiment? A ſentiment which, to prevent the temporary loſs of five men, by impreſs, would reduce fifty thouſand to beggary? But for the embargo, thouſands depending on the ordinary operations of commerce, would now be employed. Even under the reſtraints of the orders of the Britiſh Government, retaliating the French imperial decree, very large portions of the world remain open to the commerce of the United States. We may yet purſue our trade with the Britiſh dominions, in every part of the globe; with Africa, with China, and with the colonies of France, Spain, and Holland. And let me aſk, whether, in the midſt of a profound peace, when the powers of Europe poſſeſſing colonies, would, as formerly, confine the trade with them to their own bottoms, or admit us, as foreigners, only under great limitations, we could enjoy a commerce much more extenſive than is practicable at this moment, if the embargo were not in the way? Why then ſhould it be continued? Why rather was it ever laid? Can thoſe be legitimate reaſons for the embargo which are concealed from Congreſs, at the moment when they are required to impoſe it? Are the reaſons to be found in the diſpatches from Paris? Theſe have been moved for; and the motion was quaſhed by the advocates for the embargo. Why are theſe diſpatches withheld by the Executive? Why, when all claſſes of citizens anxiouſly enquire "for what is the embargo laid?" is a ſatisfactory anſwer denied? Why is not Congreſs made acquainted with the actual ſituation of the United States in relation to France? Why, in this dangerous criſis, are Mr. ARMSTRONG's letters to the Secretary of State abſolutely withheld, ſo that a line of them cannot be ſeen? Did they contain no information of the demands and intentions of the French Emperor? Did the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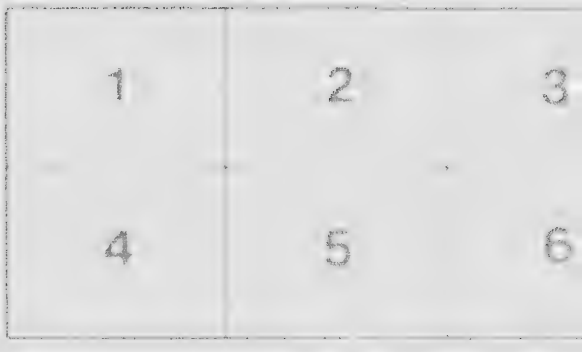

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The EMBARGO demands the firſt notice.—For perhaps no act of the national government has ever produced ſo much ſolicitude, or ſpread ſuch univerſal alarm.—Becauſe all naturally conclude, that a meaſure pregnant with incalculable miſchief to all claſſes of our fellow-citizens, would not have been propoſed by the Preſident, and adopted by Congreſs, but for cauſes deeply affecting the intereſts and ſafety of the nation. It muſt have been under the influence of this opinion that the legiſlative bodies of ſome States have expreſſed their approbation of the embargo, either explicitly, or by implication.

The following were all the papers laid by the Preſident before Congreſs, as the grounds of the embargo.

1. The proclamation of the King of Great-Britain requiring the return of his ſubjects, the ſeamen eſpecially, from foreign countries, to aid, in this hour of peculiar danger, in the defence of their own. But it being an acknowledged principle, that every nation has a right to the ſervice of its ſubjects in time of war, that proclamation could not furniſh the lighteſt ground for an embargo.

2. The extract of a letter from the Grand Judge REGNIER to the French Attorney-General for the Council of Prizes. This contained a partial interpretation of the imperial blockading decree of November 21, 1806. This decree, indeed, and its interpretation, preſent flagrant violations of our neutral rights, and of the exiſting treaty between the United States and France: but ſtill, the execution of that decree could not (from the ſmall number of French cruizers) extenſively interrupt our trade. Theſe two papers were public.

3. The letter from our Miniſter, Mr. ARMSTRONG, to Mr. CHAMPAGNY, the French Miniſter of Foreign Affairs: and

4. Mr. CHAMPAGNY's anſwer. Both theſe ought, in form or ſubſtance, alſo to have been made public. The latter would have furniſhed to our nation ſome idea of the views and expectations of France. But both were withdrawn by the Preſident, to be depoſited among other Executive ſecrets; while neither preſented any new ground to juſtify an embargo.

In the Senate, theſe papers were referred to a committee. The committee quickly reported a bill for laying an embargo, agreeably to the Preſident's propoſal. This was read a firſt, a ſecond, and a third time, and paſſed, and all in the ſhort compaſs of about four hours! A little time was repeatedly aſked, to obtain further information, and to conſider a meaſure of ſuch moment, of ſuch univerſal concern; but theſe requeſts were denied.—We were hurried into the paſſage of the bill, as if there was danger of its being rejected, if we were allowed time to obtain further information, and deliberately conſider the ſubject. For to that time our veſſels were freely ſailing on foreign voyages; and in a national point of view, the departure of half a dozen or a dozen more, while we were enquiring in-

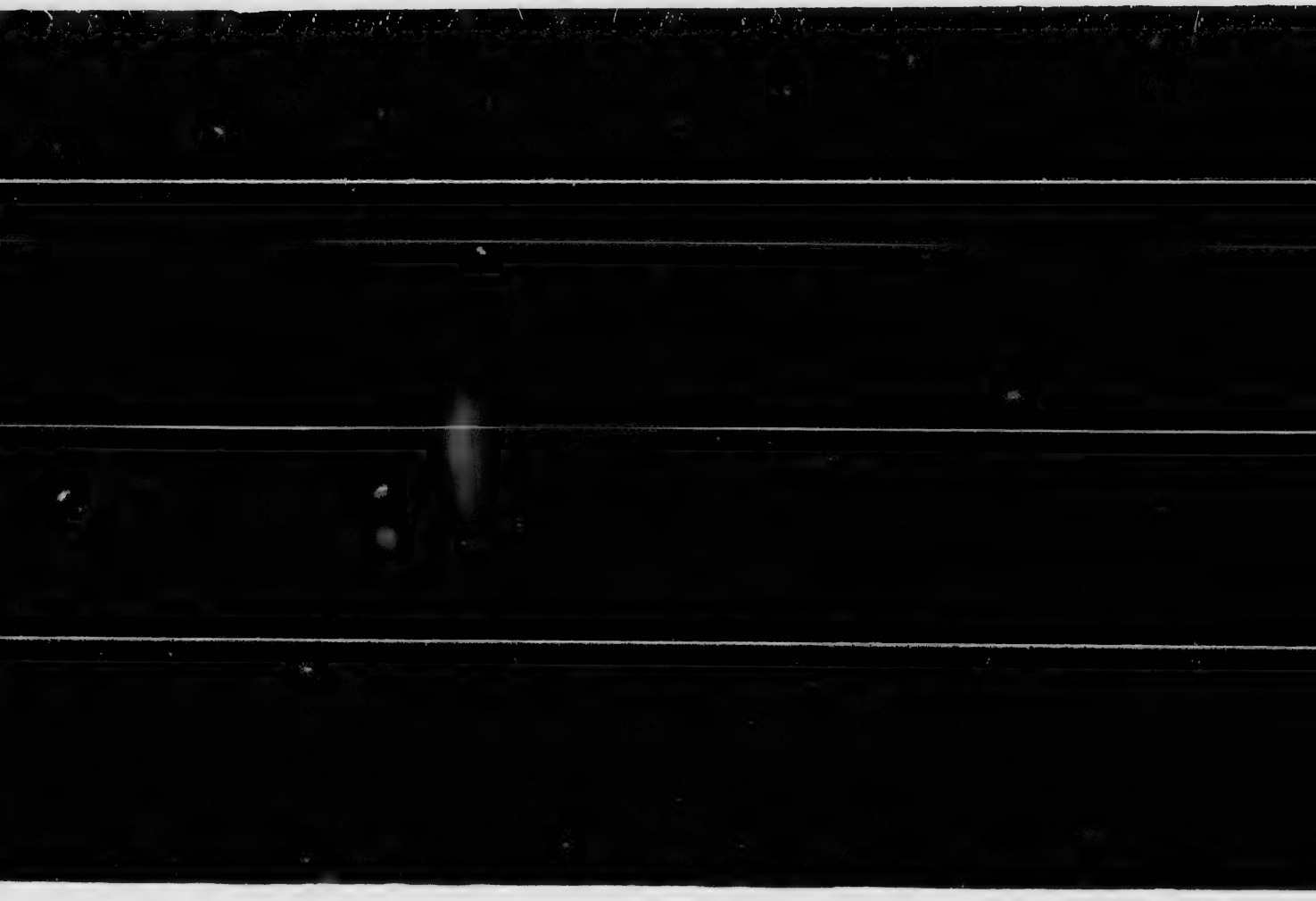
actual premiums of inſurance were a ſatisfac-tory guage. Thoſe premiums had very little increaſed, by the Britiſh proclamation not a cent: and by the French decree ſo little as not to ſtop commercial enterprizes. The great numbers of veſſels loading or loaded and prepared for ſea; the exertions every where made, on the firſt rumour of the embargo, to diſpatch them; demonſtrate the Preſident's dangers to be *imaginary*—to have been *unreal*. Or if great and real dangers unknown to commercial men, were impending, or ſure to fall, how deſirable was it to have had them *officially* declared and publiſhed! This would have produced a voluntary embargo, and prevented every complaint. Beſides, the dangers clearly defined and underſtood, the public mind would not have been diſquieted with imaginary fears, the more tormenting, becauſe uncertain.

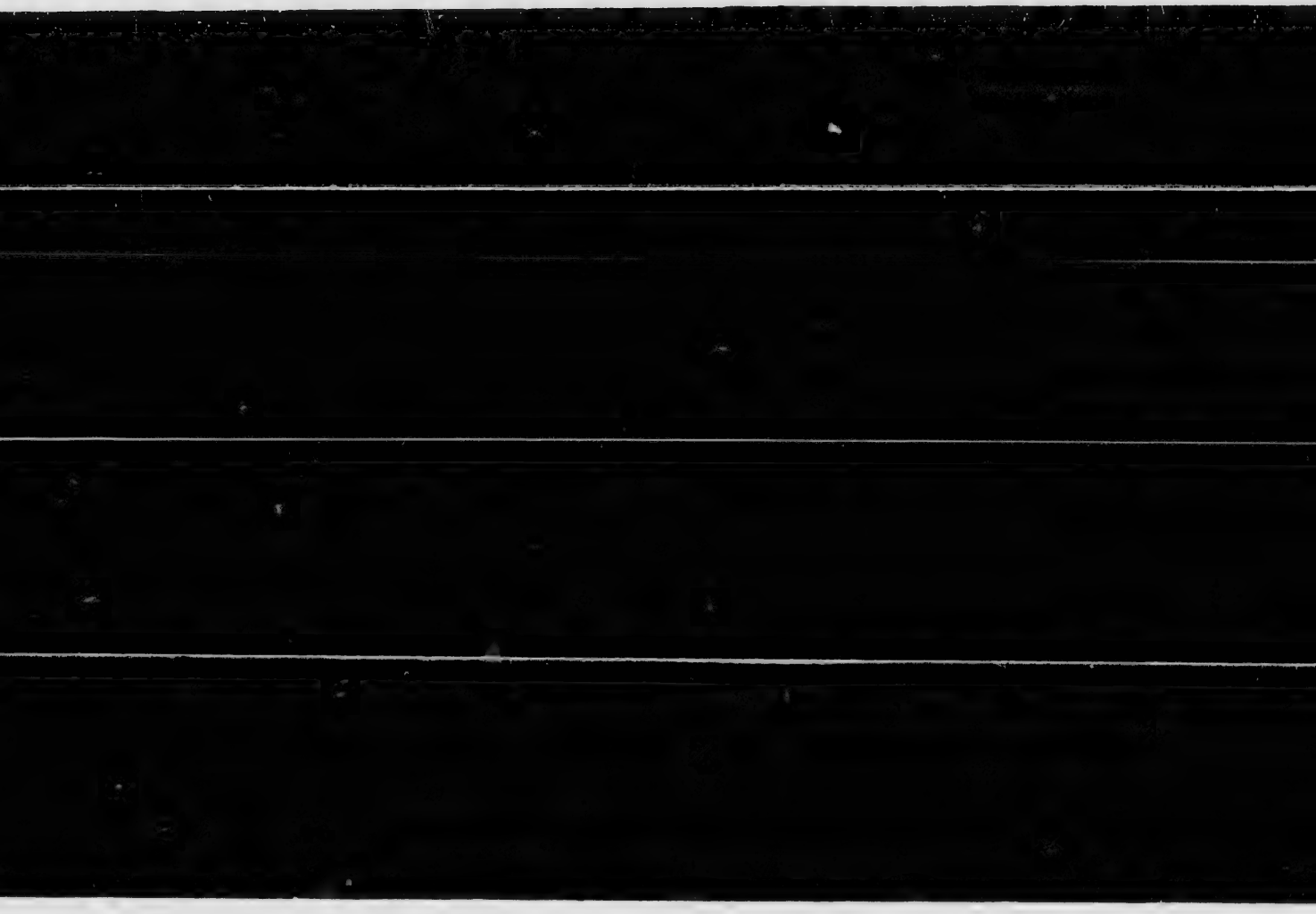
It is true that conſiderable numbers of veſſels were collected in our ports, and many held in ſuſpenſe; not, however, from any new dangers which *appeared*; but from the myſterious conduct of our affairs, after the attack on the *Chelapeake*; and from the painful apprehenſion that the courſe the Preſident was purſuing would terminate in war. The *National Intelligencer* (uſually conſidered as the Executive news-paper) gave the alarm, and it was echoed through the United States—War, probable or inevitable war, was the conſtant theme of the news-papers, and of the converſations, as was reported, of perſons ſuppoſed to be beſt informed of Executive deſigns. Yet amid this din of war, no adequate preparations were ſeen making to meet it. The order to detach a hundred thouſand militia to fight the Britiſh navy (for there was no appearance of an enemy in any other ſhape) was ſo completely abſurd as to excite, with men of common ſenſe, no other emotion than ridicule. Not the ſhadow of a reaſon that could operate on the mind of a man of common underſtanding can be offered in its juſtification. The refuſal of the Britiſh officer to receive the frigate *Chelapeake* as a *prize*, when tendered by her commander, is a demonſtration that the attack upon her was excluſively for the purpoſe of taking their deſerters; and not intended as the commencement of a *war* between the two nations. The Preſident knew that the Britiſh had no invading army to land on our ſhores, and the detached militia would be uſeleſs except againſt land-forces. Why then was this order for the militia given?—The nature of the caſe, and the actual ſtate of things, authorize the inference, that its *immediate*, not its *only* object, was to increaſe the public alarm, to aggravate the public reſentment againſt Great-Britain, to excite a war paſſion, and in the height of this artificial fever on the public mind, which was to be made known in Great-Britain, to renew the demands on her government; in the poor expectation of extorting, in that ſtate of things, conceſſions of points which ſhe had always conſidered as her *rights*, and which at

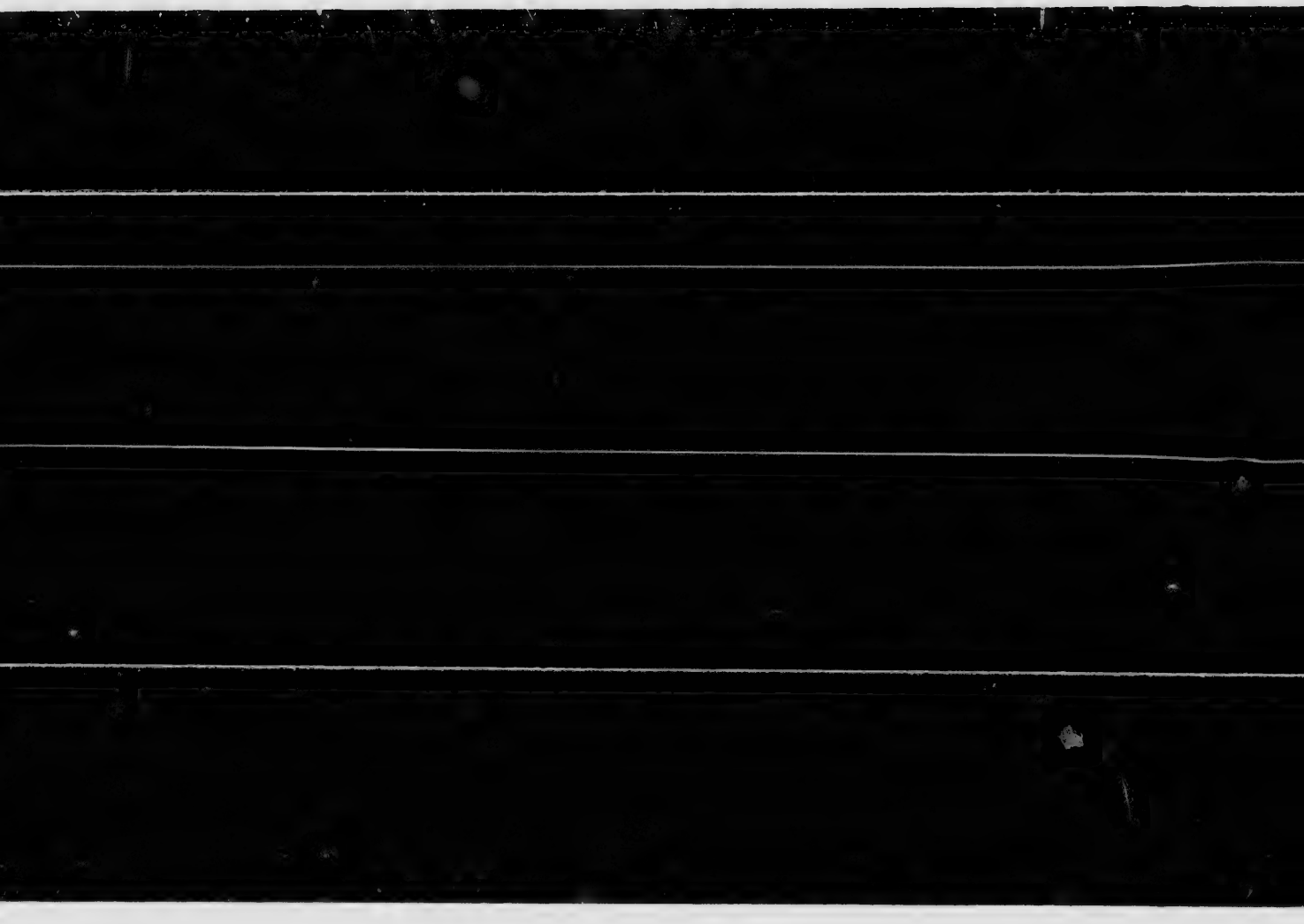
found on board the merchant veſſels of any nation. Thus to inſiſt on her yielding this point, and inſeparably to connect it with the affair of the *Cheſapeake*, was tantamount to a determination not to negotiate at all.

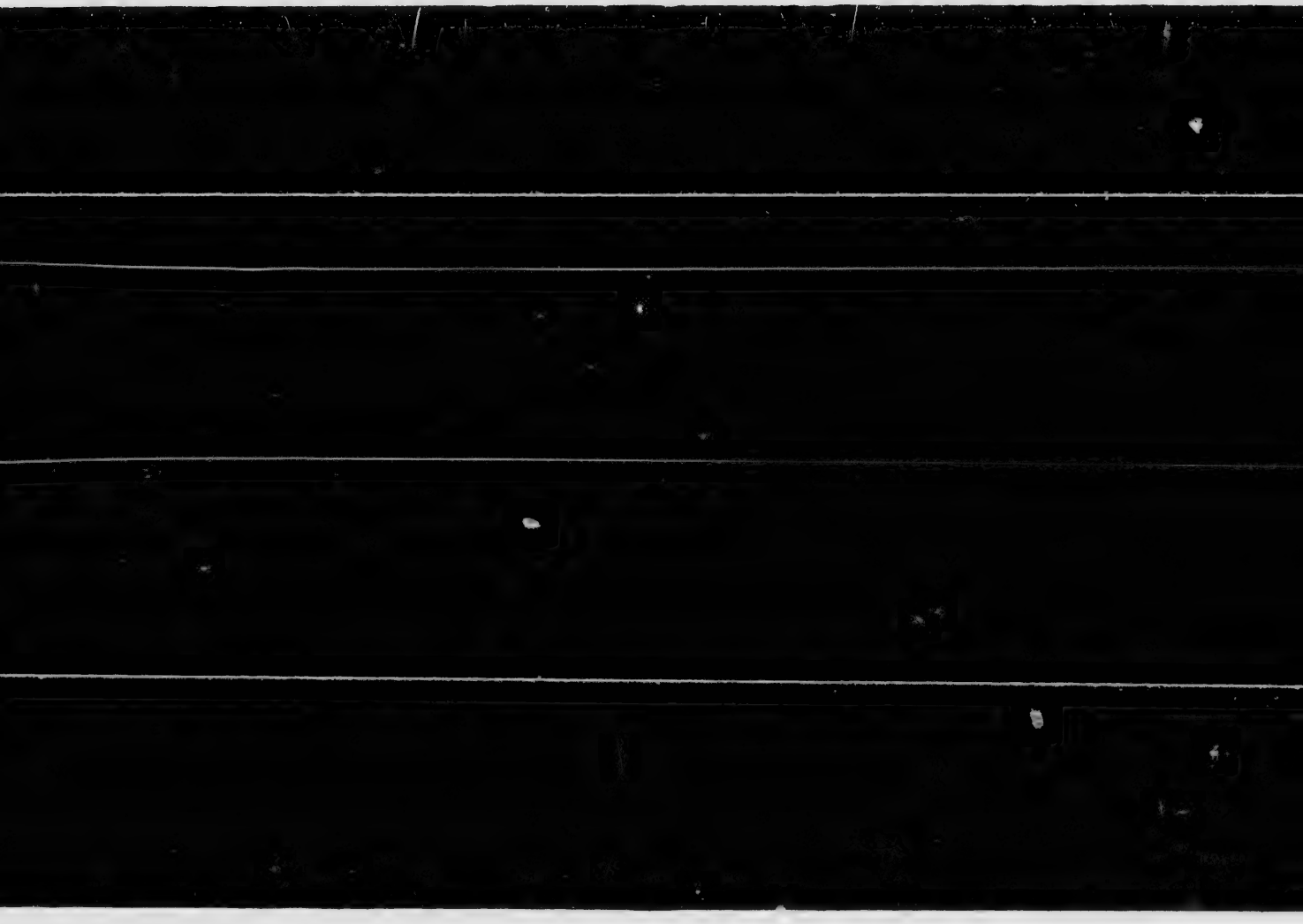
I write, Sir, with freedom; for the times are too perilous to allow thoſe who are placed in high and reſponſible ſituations to be ſilent or reſerved. The peace and ſafety of our country are ſuſpended on a thread. The courſe we have ſeen purſued leads on to war —to a war with Great Britain—a war abſolutely without neceſſity—a war which, whether diſaſtrous or ſucceſsful, muſt bring miſery and ruin to the United States: *Miſery*, by the deſtruction of our navigation and commerce (perhaps alſo our faireſt ſeaport towns and cities) the loſs of markets for our produce, the want of foreign goods and manufactures, and the other evils incident to a ſtate of war! And *ruin*, by the loſs of our liberty and independence. For if with the aid of our arms Great-Britain were ſubdued from that moment (though flattered perhaps with the name of *allies*) we ſhould become the *Provinces of France*. This is a reſult ſo obvious, that I muſt crave your pardon for noticing it. Some advocates of Executive meaſures admit it. They acknowledge that the navy of Britain is our ſhield againſt the overwhelming power of France.—Why then do they perſiſt in a courſe of conduct tending to a rupture with Great-Britain?—Will it be believed that it is principally, or ſolely, to procure inviolability to the *merchant flag* of the United States? In other words, to protect the ſeamen, Britiſh *ſubjects*, as well as our own citizens, on board our merchant veſſels? It is a *fact* that this has been *made* the great ſtumbling block to an amicable ſettlement with Great-Britain. Yet (I repeat) it is perfectly well known that the deſires to obtain exemption for our *ſubjects* and the American citizens, impreſſed by miſtake, are delivered upon duly authenticated proof. The evil we complain of ariſes from the impoſſibility of eaſily diſtinguiſhing the perſons of two nations who a few years ſince were one people, who exhibit the ſame manners, ſpeak the ſame language, and poſſeſs ſimilar features. But ſeeing that we ſeldom hear complaints in the great *navigating ſtates*, how happens it to be ſuch extreme ſympathy for American ſeamen at Waſhington? eſpecially in gentlemen from the interior States, which have no ſeamen, or from thoſe Atlantic States whoſe native ſeamen bear a very ſmall proportion to the whole of New-England? In fact, the cauſes of complaint are much fewer than are pretended. They rarely occur in the States whoſe ſeamen are chiefly native. The firſt merchant in the United States, in anſwering my late enquiry about Britiſh impreſſments, ſays, "Since the *Cheſapeake* affair we have had no cauſe of complaint. I cannot find one ſingle inſtance where they have taken one man out of a merchant veſſel. I have had more than twenty veſſels arrived in that time, Theſe have been moved for; and the motion was quaſhed by the advocates for the embargo. Why are theſe diſpatches withheld by the Executive? Why, when all claſſes of citizens anxiouſly enquire "for what is the embargo laid?" is a ſatisfactory anſwer denied? Why is not Congreſs made acquainted with the actual ſituation of the United States in relation to France? Why, in this dangerous crisis, are Mr. ARMSTRONG's letters to the Secretary of State abſolutely withheld, ſo that a line of them cannot be ſeen? Did they contain no information of the demands and intentions of the French Emperor? Did the *Revenge* ſail from England to France, and there wait three or four weeks for diſpatches of no importance? If ſo, why, regardleſs of the public ſolicitude, are their contents ſo carefully concealed? If really unimportant, what harm can ariſe from telling Congreſs and the Nation, *officially*, that they contain nothing of moment to the ſafety, the liberty, the honour, or the intereſts of the United States? On the contrary, are they ſo cloſely locked up becauſe they will not bear the light? Would their diſcloſure rouſe the ſpirit of the people, ſtill ſlumbering in blind confidence in the Executive? Has the French Emperor declared that he will have no neutrals? Has he required that our *ports*, like thoſe of his vaſſal ſtates in Europe, *be ſhut againſt Britiſh commerce*? Is the embargo a *ſubſtitute*, a *milder form* of compliance with that barſh demand, which if exhibited in its naked and inſulting aſpect, the American ſpirit might yet reſiſt? Are we ſtill to be kept profoundly ignorant of the declarations and avowed deſigns of the French Emperor, although they may affect our liberty and independence? And, in the mean time, are we, by abſtracted topics, by cheriſhing prejudices, and by exciting freſh reſentments, to be drawn gradually into a war with Great-Britain? Why amidſt the extreme anxiety of the public mind, is it ſtill kept on the rack of fruitleſs expectation, by the Preſident's portentous ſilence reſpecting his French diſpatches?—In this concealment there is danger. In this concealment muſt be wrapt up the real cauſe of the embargo. On any other ſuppoſition it is inexplicable.

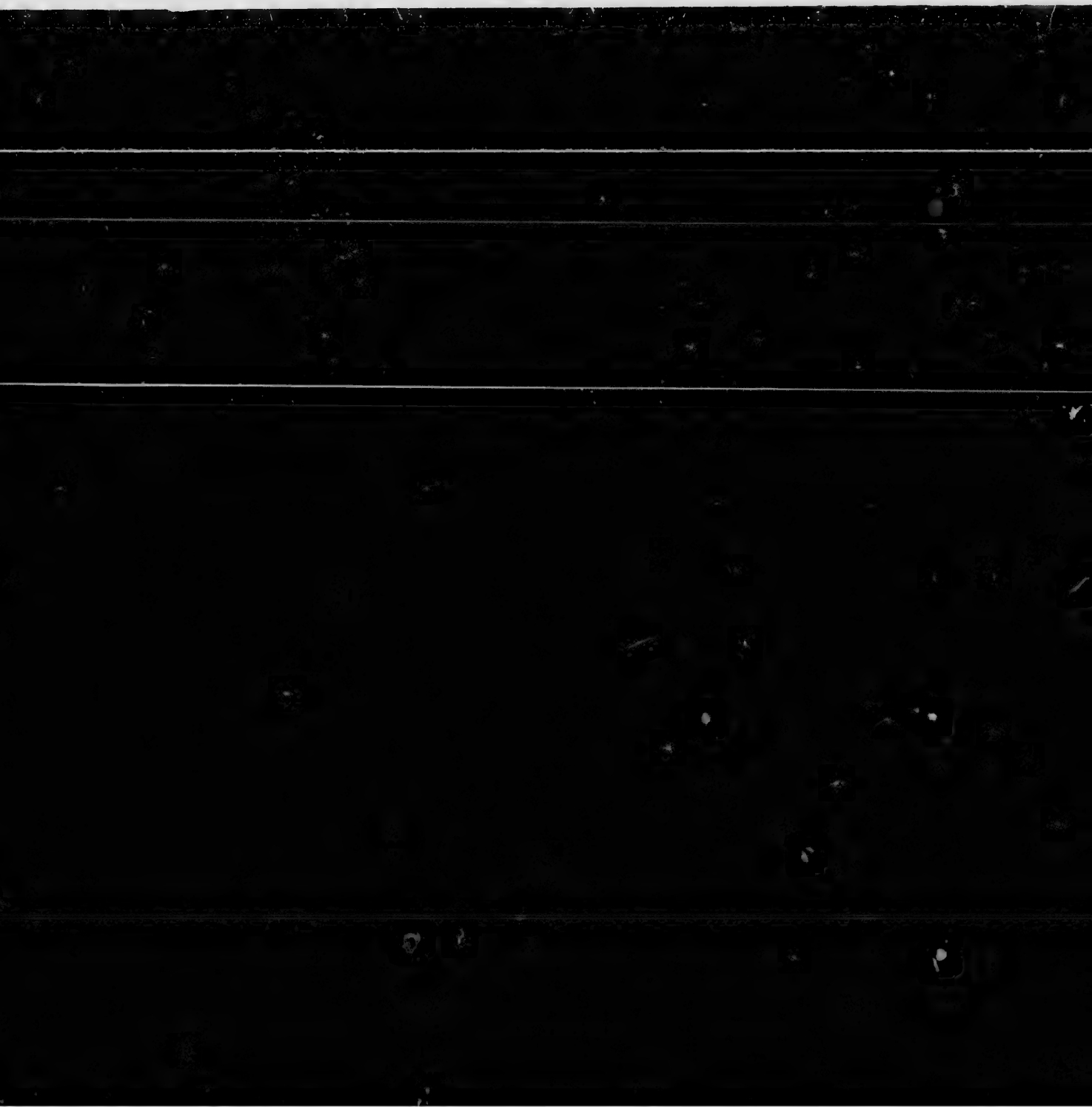
I am alarmed, Sir, at this perilous ſtate of things: I cannot repreſs my ſuſpicions; or forbear thus to exhibit to you the grounds on which they reſt. The people are adviſed to poſe implicit confidence in the National Government: in that unbounded confidence lies our danger. Armed with that confidence, the Executive may procure the adoption of meaſures which may overwhelm us with ruin, as ſurely as if he had an army at his heels. By falſe policy, or by inordinate fears, our country may be betrayed and ſubjugated to France, as ſurely as by corruption. I truſt, Sir, that no one who knows me will charge it to vanity, when I ſay, that I have ſome knowledge of public men and of public affairs; and on that knowledge, and with ſo

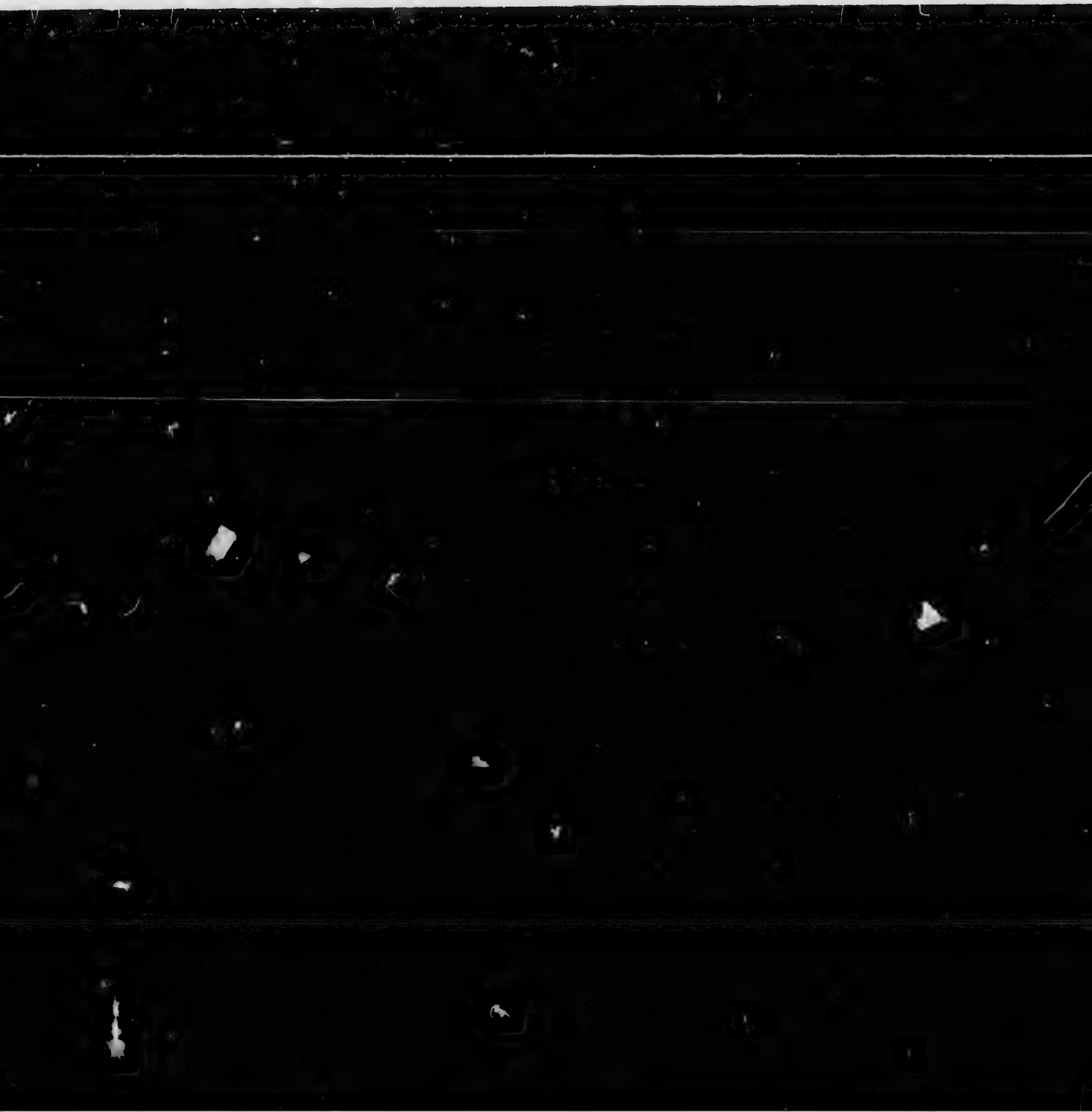


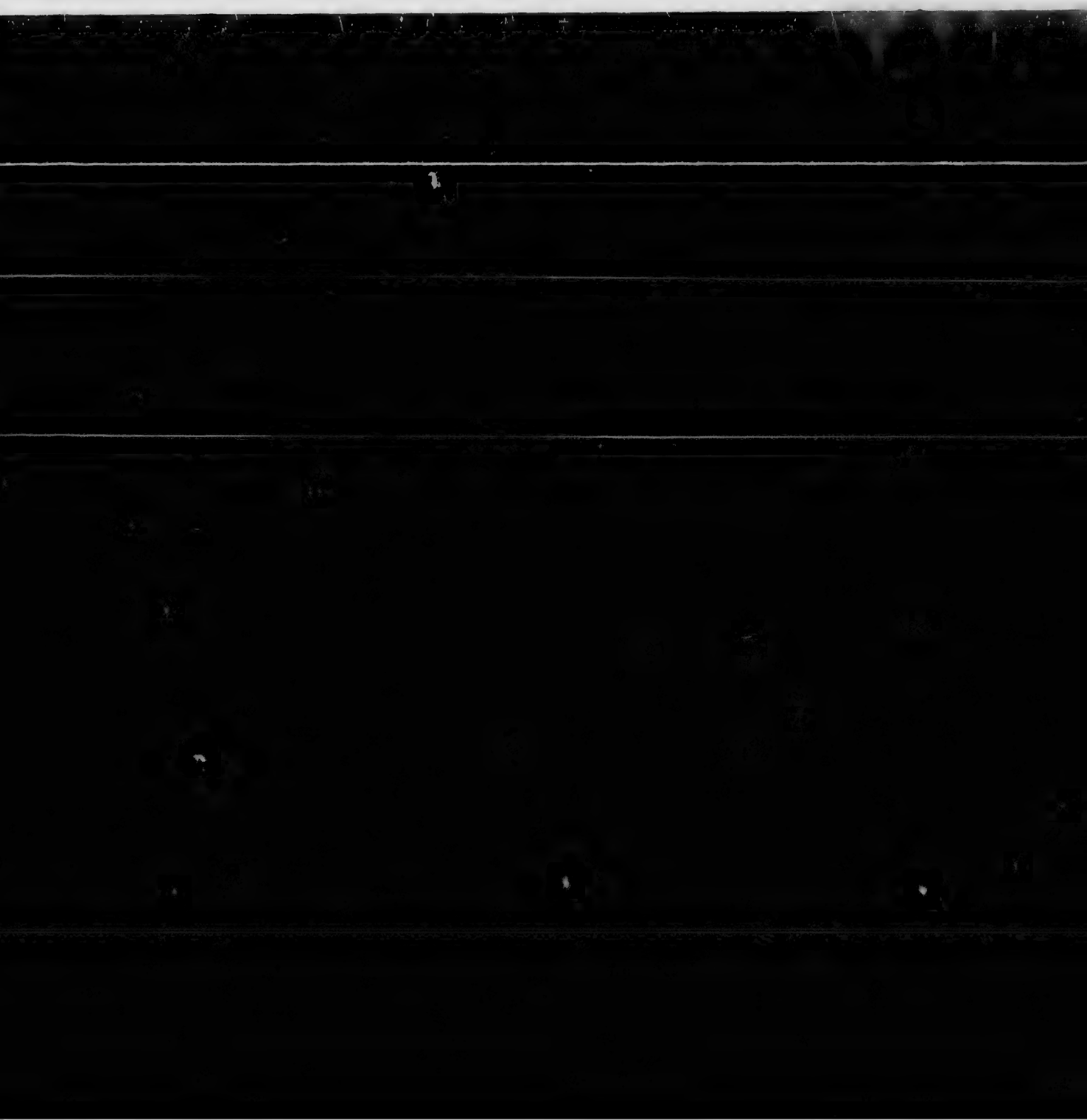












[illegible] I declare to you, that I have no confidence in the wisdom or correctneſs of our public meaſures: that our country is in imminent danger: that it is eſſential to the public ſafety that the blind confidence in our rulers ſhould ceaſe; that the State Legiſlatures ſhould know the facts and reaſons on which important general laws are founded; *and eſpecially that thoſe States whoſe farms are [illegible] and whoſe harveſts are gathered in early ſeaſons, ſhould immediately and ſeriouſly conſider how to preſerve them.* In all the branches of government, commercial information is wanting; and in "this receſs," called a city, that want cannot be ſupplied. Nothing but the ſenſe of the commercial States, clearly and emphatically expreſſed, will ſave them from ruin.

Are our thouſands of ſhips and veſſels to rot in our harbours? Are our ſixty thouſand ſeamen and fiſhermen to be deprived of employment, and, with their families, reduced to want and beggary? Are our hundreds of thouſands of farmers to be compelled to ſuffer their millions in ſurplus produce to periſh on their hands: that the Preſident may make an experiment on *our* patience and fortitude, and on the towering pride, the boundleſs ambition, and unyielding perſeverance of the conqueror of Europe? Sir, I have reaſon to believe, that the Preſident contemplates the continuance of the embargo until the French Emperor repeals his decrees violating as well his treaty with the United States as every neutral right; and until Britain thereupon recals her retaliating orders!—By that time we may have neither ſhips nor ſeamen: and that is preciſely the point to which ſome men wiſh to reduce us.—To ſee the *improvidence* of this project (to call it by no harſher name, and without adverting to ulterior views) let us look back to former years.

Notwithſtanding the well-founded complaints of ſome individuals, and the murmurs of others; notwithſtanding the frequent Executive declarations of maritime aggreſſions committed by Great-Britain; notwithſtanding the outrageous decrees of France and Spain, and the wanton ſpoliations practiſed and executed by their cruizers and tribunals, of which we ſometimes hear a faint whiſper; —the commerce of the United States has hitherto proſpered beyond all example. Our citizens have accumulated wealth; and the public revenue, annually increaſing, has been the Preſident's annual boaſt.

Theſe facts demonſtrate, that although G. Britain, with her thouſand ſhips of war, could have deſtroyed our commerce, ſhe has really done it no eſſential injury; and that the other belligerents, heretofore reſtrained by ſome regard to National Law, and limited by the ſmall number of their cruizers, have not inflicted upon it any de[illegible] in this full tide of ſucceſs, [illegible] ſuddenly arreſted: an alarm[illegible] fearful apprehenſions are ex[illegible] chants, in particular, throw[illegible] conſternation, are adviſed by[illegible] bargo to keep their veſſels[illegible] what is the cauſe of this mi[illegible] vous alarm? We know it[illegible] tent. *It was the unauthorize[illegible] iſh naval officer on the Ameri[illegible] peake, to ſearch for and t[illegible] known to have been received[illegible] been often demanded, and as o[illegible] livered up.* As was expected[illegible] men, and by the Preſident[illegible] before obſerved) the Brit[illegible] on the firſt information o[illegible] event (and without waitin[illegible] tion) diſavowed the act o[illegible] claimed the principle of [illegible] armed veſſels—and declare[illegible] make ſuitable reparation, [illegible] of the caſe ſhould be fully k[illegible]

Under ſuch circumſtance[illegible] this alarm of war? An ala[illegible] diſquieted the public mind[illegible] an interruption of commerce[illegible] ous to our merchants and ſe[illegible]

I will cloſe this long lett[illegible] the exiſting pretences—for [illegible] —for a war with Great-Bi[illegible]

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2. The merchant veſſels [illegible] and Holland, being driven [illegible] deſtroyed, the commerce o[illegible] with one another, and wi[illegible] could no longer be carried [illegible] Here the veſſels of neutral n[illegible] their aid, and carried on [illegible] commerce of thoſe nations. [illegible] men thus liberated from the[illegible] thoſe nations, in the preſe[illegible] wars, were enabled to man t[illegible] and the neutral veſſels and[illegible] their places, became *in fac[illegible] name, auxiliaries in war.* [illegible] thoſe nations, without one

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ſea appropriated for its protection, was intended thus to be ſecured under neutral flags; while the merchant veſſels of Great-Britain, with its numerous armed ſhips to guard them, were expoſed to occaſional captures.—Such a courſe of things Great-Britain has reſiſted, not in the preſent only, but in former wars; at leaſt as far back as that of 1756. And ſhe has claimed and maintained a right to impoſe on this commerce ſome limits and reſtraints: becauſe it was a commerce which was denied by thoſe nations to neutrals in times of peace; becauſe it was a commerce of immenſe value to the ſubjects of her enemies; and becauſe it filled their treaſuries with money to enable them to carry on their wars with Great-Britain.

3. The third and only remaining pretence for a war with Great-Britain, is the unfortunate affair of the *Chefapeake*; which having been already ſtated and explained, I will only remark here, that it is not to be believed that the Britiſh government, after being defeated as before mentioned, in its endeavours to make reparation in London, for the wrong done by its ſervant, would have ſent hither a ſpecial envoy to give honourable ſatisfaction, but from its ſincere deſire to cloſe this wound, *if our own government would ſuffer it to be healed.*

Permit me now to aſk, what man impartially viewing the ſubject, will have the boldneſs to ſay, that there exiſts any cauſe for plunging the United States into a war with Great-Britain? Who that reſpects his reputation, as a man of common diſcernment, will ſay it? Who that regards the intereſts and welfare of his country will ſay it? Who then can juſtify, who can find an excuſe for a courſe of conduct which has brought our country into its preſent ſtate of alarm, embarraſſment and diſtreſs? For myſelf, Sir, I muſt declare the opinion, that no *free* country was ever before ſo cauſeleſsly, and ſo blindly, thrown from the height of proſperity, and plunged into a ſtate of dreadful anxiety and ſuffering. But from this degraded and wretched ſituation it is not yet too late to eſcape.

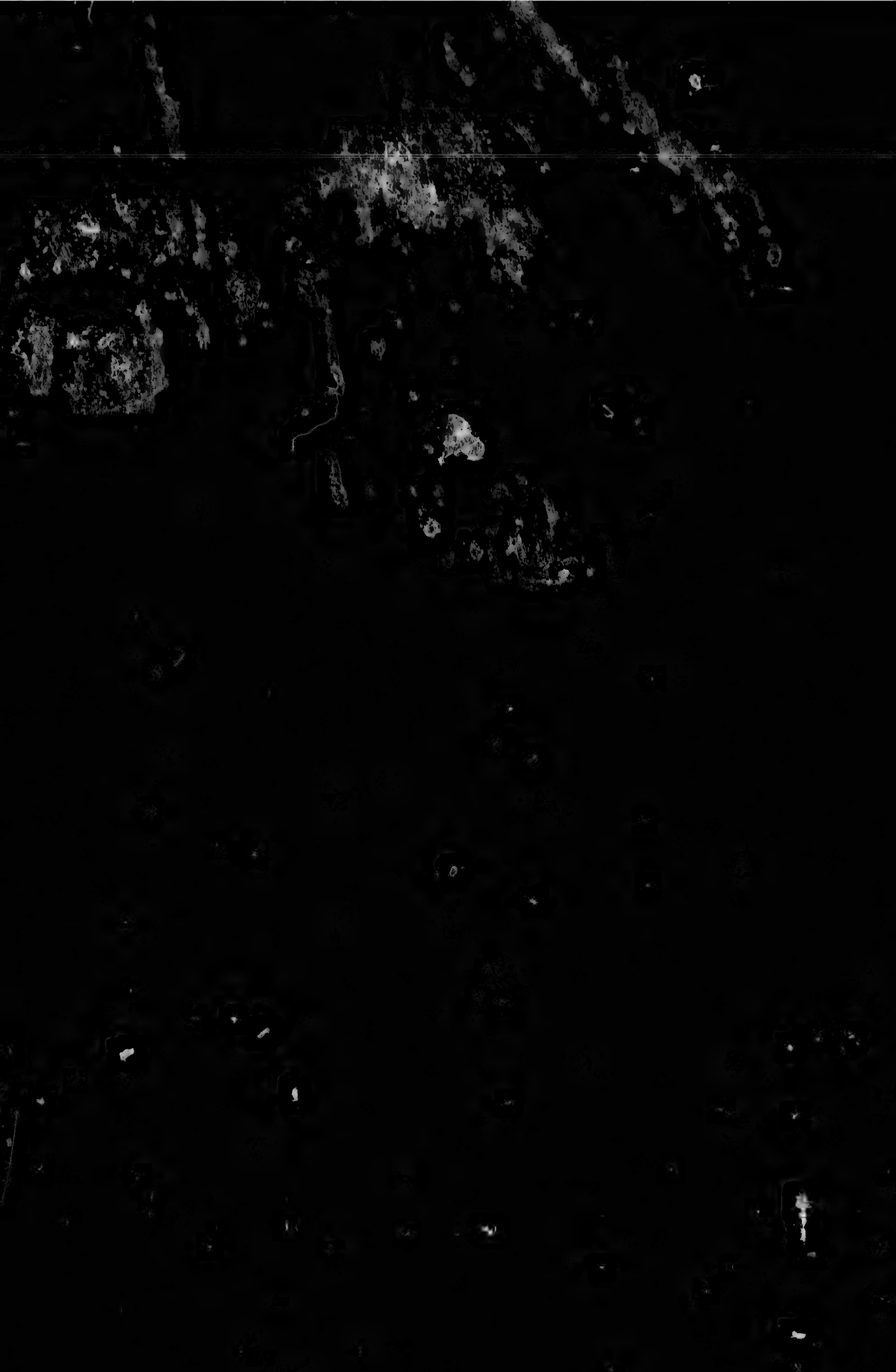
Let the diſpatches from our Miniſter in France be no longer concealed. Let the Preſident perform the duty required of him by the Conſtitution; by giving to Congreſs *full information of the ſtate of the union* in reſpect to foreign nations. *Above all, let him unfold our actual ſituation with France.* Let him tell us what are the demands and propoſals of her Ruler. Had theſe been *honourable* to the United States, would not the Preſident have been eager to diſcloſe them? That they are of an entirely different nature, that they are *diſhonourable*, that they are *ruinous to our commercial intereſts*, and *dangerous to our liberty and independence*, we are left to infer.

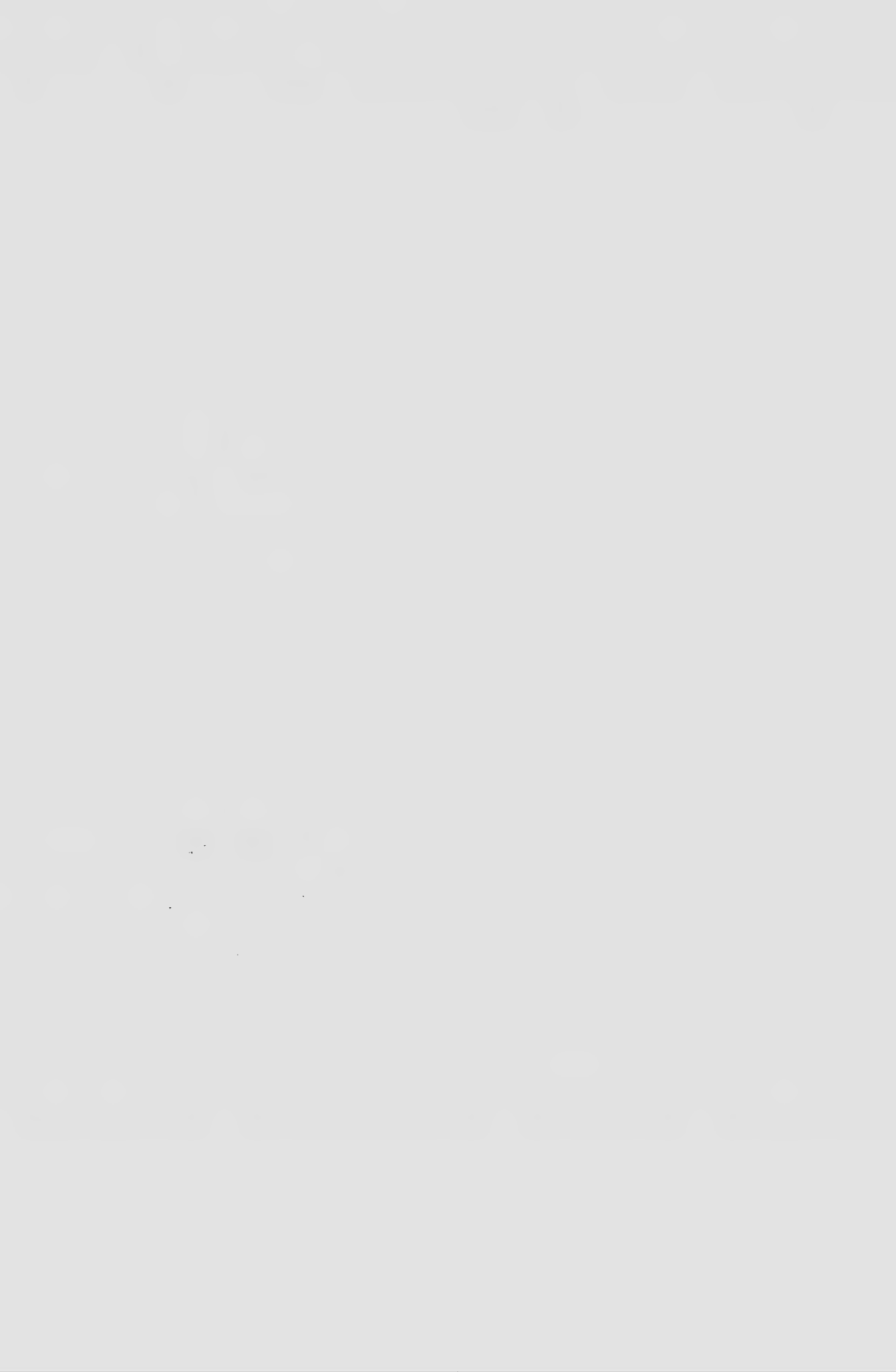
I hope, Sir, that the nature and magnitude of the ſubject will furniſh a ſufficient apology for the length and ſtyle of this letter. Perhaps ſome may deem it preſumptuous thus to queſtion the correctneſs of the proceedings of our government. A ſtrong ſenſe of duty, and diſtreſſing apprehenſions of National ruin, have forced the taſk upon me. To ſome the ſentiments which, in the ſincerity of my heart, I have expreſſed, may give offence: for often nothing offends ſo much as TRUTH. Yet I do not deſire to offend any man. But when I ſee the dangerous extent of Executive influence: when I ſee the Great Council of the Nation called to enact laws deeply affecting the intereſts of all claſſes of citizens, without adequate information of the reaſons of that call: when I obſerve the deceptive gloſſes with which the miſchiefs of the embargo are attempted to be palliated; and *poſterior events* adduced as reaſons to juſtify the meaſure: when I know that the riſks of continuing their commercial purſuits againſt all *known dangers* can and will be more accurately calculated by our merchants than by our government: when if any *new dangers* to commerce were impending of which our merchants were uninformed, but of which the government obtained the knowledge through its Miniſter at Paris, or elſewhere, it was plainly the duty of the Executive to make thoſe dangers known to Congreſs and the nation: and ſince if ſo made known, the merchants and ſea-faring citizens would, for their own intereſts and ſafety, have taken due precautions to guard againſt them; and as it hence appears certain that an embargo was not neceſſary to the ſafety of "our ſeamen, our veſſels, or our merchandize:" when, Sir, I ſee and conſider theſe things, and their evil tendency: in a word, when I obſerve a courſe of proceeding which to me appears calculated to miſlead the public mind to public ruin; I cannot be ſilent. Regardleſs, therefore, of perſonal conſequences, I have undertaken to communicate theſe details; with the view to diſſipate dangerous illuſions; to give to my conſtituents correct information; to excite enquiry; and to rouſe that vigilant jealouſy which is characteriſtic of REPUBLICANS, and eſſential to the preſervation of their rights, their liberties, and their independence.

I have the honour to be, very reſpectfully, Sir, your obedient ſervant,

TIMOTHY PICKERING.

His Excellency JAMES SULLIVAN,
Governor of the Commonwealth of
Maſſachuſetts.





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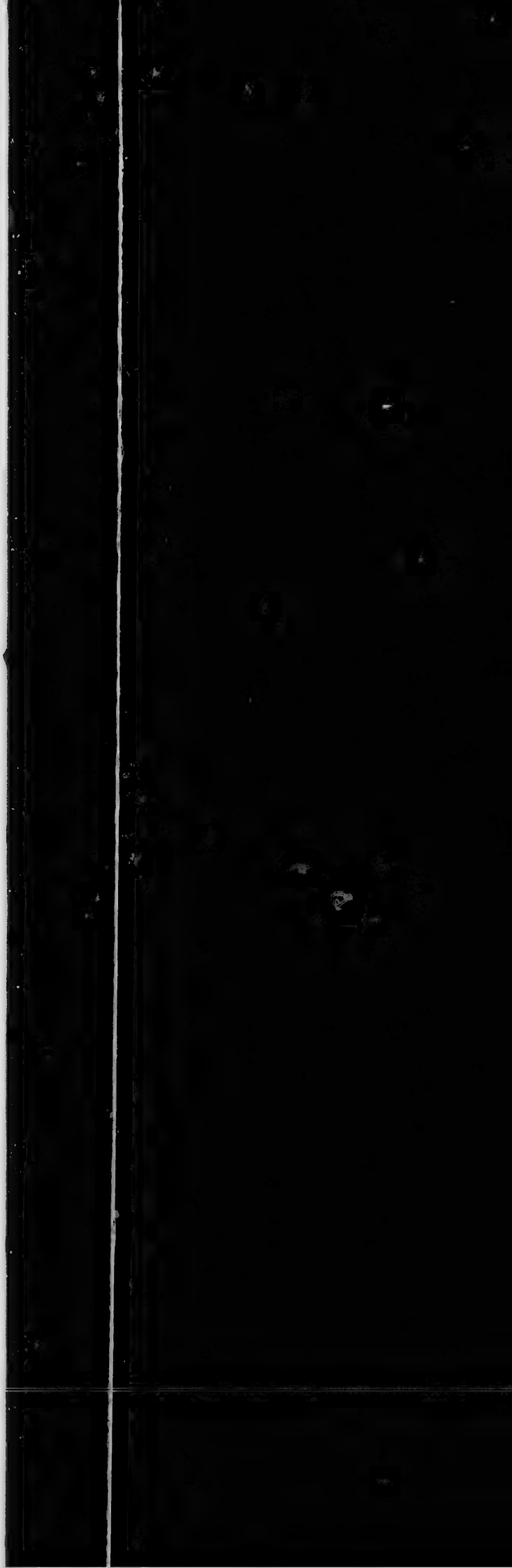
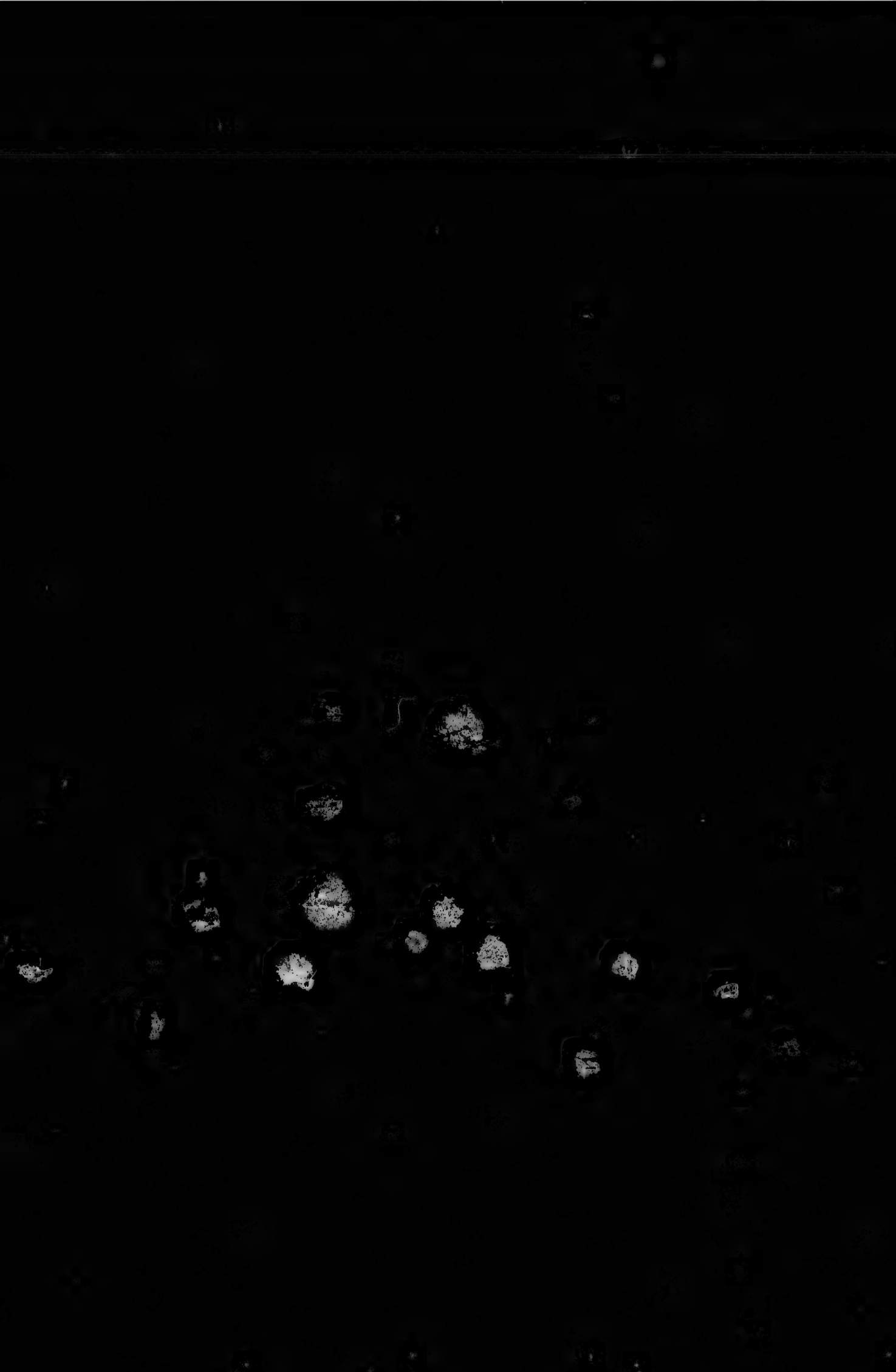
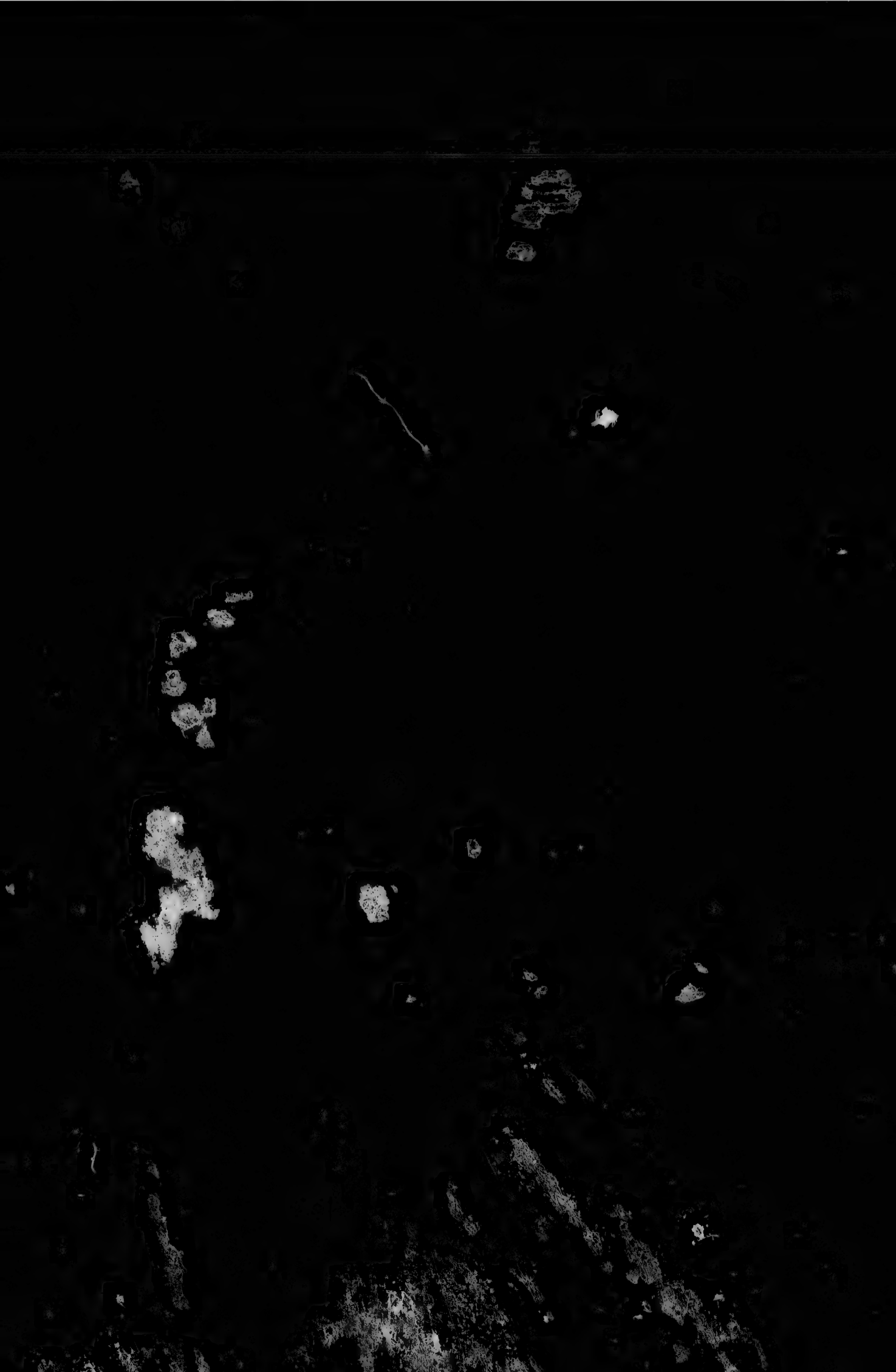
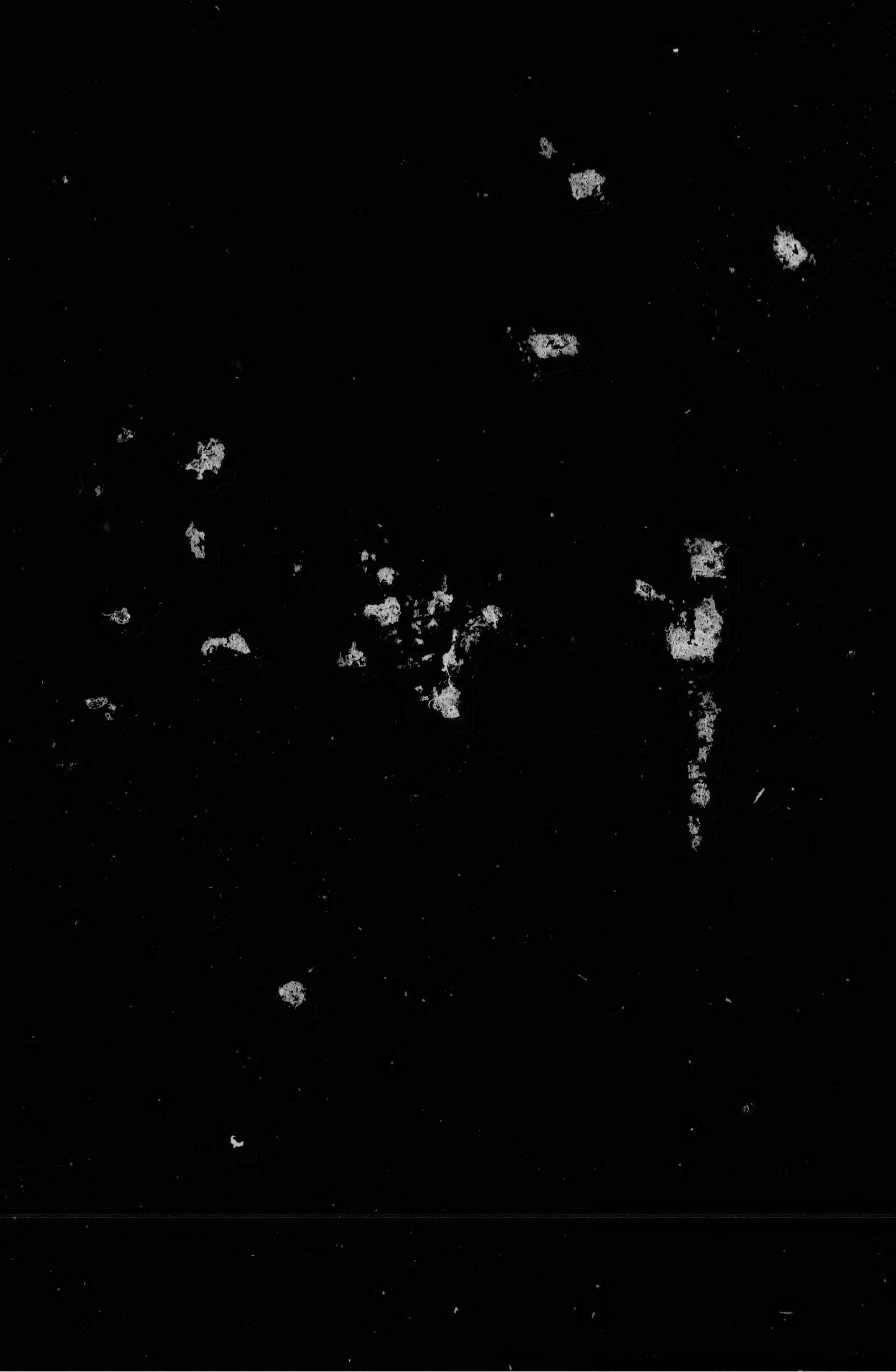
His Excellency JAMES SULLIVAN,
Governor of the Commonwealth of Maſſachuſetts.

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